

too much, money in the fund, so we can say we have done our job.

I want to thank the members of my administration for working hard on this issue. I want to thank the Governors in the affected States for being so compassionate in caring for their citizens. I want to thank the folks at the local level for loving a neighbor like they'd like to be loved themselves.

This Thursday, I'm going to take our team down there to meet with the folks in Iowa. And I, unfortunately, have been to too many disasters as President. But one thing I've always learned is that the American citizen can overcome these disasters. And life, while it may seem dim at this point in time, can always be better because of the resiliency and care of our citizens.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:21 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Agriculture Edward T. Schafer; R. David Paulison, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency; Gov. Chet Culver of Iowa; and James A. Nussle, Director, Office of Management and Budget.

Remarks Following a Briefing on the Security Situation in Afghanistan

June 17, 2008

The President. It's been my privilege to have served with two really fine Americans, General Dan McNeill and Maureen McNeill. I've gotten to know the General well. He's a tough, no-nonsense patriot who was our commander in Afghanistan. I want to thank you very much for the briefing you just gave me about the issues that we face, your optimism about success.

I was telling the Secretary and the General, I just—about my trip to Europe, where I was pleased with the strong commitments of our allies to helping us succeed in Afghanistan. They know that what happens in Afghanistan matters to their own internal security.

They fully understand as well that helping young girls go to school and helping moms raise their babies in a—you know, in a better environment, helping rebuild this society

after years of tyranny is in all our interests. And it's also a moral duty we have.

And so I'm pleased, Mr. Secretary, that your hard work in working with the allies is paying off.

And, General, I know you're moving on, but the country thanks you for what you did. The world is better off because of your service. I'm proud to have you here.

Gen. Dan K. McNeill. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Dan K. McNeill, USA, former Commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, and his wife, Maureen; and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

Remarks at a Reception for Black Music Month

June 17, 2008

Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thank you. Welcome to the White House. I really appreciate you coming to celebrate Black Music Month. Music has been a part of this house since its beginning. Some of our Presidents themselves were skilled musicians. Some were not. [Laughter] As a matter of fact, after the Temptations came here a couple of months ago, I was so inspired that I thought I would take up singing. [Laughter] Laura said, "You might just stick with practicing your speaking." [Laughter] So thanks for giving me a chance to do it today. And thanks for coming. We're going to have a pretty special day here at the White House.

I want to thank my friend Alphonso Jackson and Marcia. It's good to see you. Appreciate you being here.

Rod Paige, former Secretary of the Education, celebrating his 75th birthday today. Yes. You're looking good, Rodney.

Dr. Dorothy Height—honored you're here, Dr. Height. Proud to be with you. Roslyn Brock, vice chairman of the NAACP—Roslyn—yes, good to see you, Roslyn. Thanks for coming. Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League—proud to have you here, Marc, thanks for coming.

John Styll, president and CEO of the Gospel Music Association—thanks, John. Dr. Bobby Jones, television host—where are you, Bobby? There you are, Bobby. Dyana Williams, cofounder and president of the International Association of African American Music—Dyana, thank you for coming—and everybody else. [*Laughter*]

As we honor black music in America, our thoughts turn to one of its legends, Bo Diddley. Bo was one of the pioneers of rock and roll. And during his more than five decades as a singer, songwriter, and performer, he changed the face of music; he really did. We mourn his loss, yet we know this: that his memory will live on the songs and the joy he brought to millions, including a little fellow like me. So all of us here today send our thoughts and prayers to Bo Diddley's family.

Over the years, the White House has been home to many memorable events in black music. I suspect that 30 years from now, when a President is speaking, he's going to say, this is going to be one of the memorable events. In 1882, President Chester A. Arthur invited to the White House the first black choir ever to perform here, the Jubilee Singers from Fisk University in Tennessee. Of course, during those days they had trouble finding a place to stay. But they were welcomed warmly here at the White House, just like everybody here is welcomed warmly at the White House. Their music was so powerful that it moved President Arthur to tears.

In the ensuing decades, other Presidents followed this example, recognizing the contributions of black musicians when many other Americans would not. Benjamin Harrison welcomed the daughter of a former slave, an opera singer named Sisseretta Jones. President Franklin Roosevelt called on the talented Maria [Marian]^{*} Anderson to sing "Ave Maria" for the King and Queen of England.

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter welcomed the legendary Chuck Berry in his first official celebration of Black Music Month at the White House. Ever the performer, Chuck Berry changed the lyrics in one of his famous songs from "Oh Carol" to "Oh Amy,"

in honor of the little girl sitting on the White House lawn. The day's finale came when the entire audience rose to its feet, swaying and clapping to the gospel song "Jesus is the Answer."

For this year's Black Music Month, we return to the theme of gospel music. The gospel music tradition was born from great pain. Slaves sang spirituals to communicate with one another in the fields, and songs of faith helped black Americans endure the injustice of segregation. Today, gospel is more than an anchor for black culture and history; it's a source of inspiration for the whole Nation.

Gospel has influenced some of the legends of other forms of American music. Louis Armstrong once said that when he sang in church, his heart went into every song. Aretha Franklin wowed crowds in her dad's church in Detroit. Elvis Presley listened to gospel music after rock concerts to calm his mind. And Bob Dylan won a Grammy for his song—for his album of gospel hymns.

Today, gospel music continues to provide strength for our communities, and it is making the "good news" sound sweeter than ever. I know you're looking forward to three great gospel performers we have in store. So I'd like to now turn the podium over to the founder of Gospel Today magazine, our outstanding emcee this evening, Teresa Hairston.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:01 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso R. Jackson and his wife, Marcia; civil rights leader Dorothy I. Height; and Amy Lynn Carter, daughter of former President Jimmy Carter.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Dmitriy A. Medvedev of Russia on the Fourth Meeting of the Global Initiative To Combat Nuclear Terrorism
June 17, 2008

We are pleased to be working closely together with our Global Initiative Partners to combat nuclear terrorism. That so many nations have joined the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism demonstrates a

^{*} White House correction.